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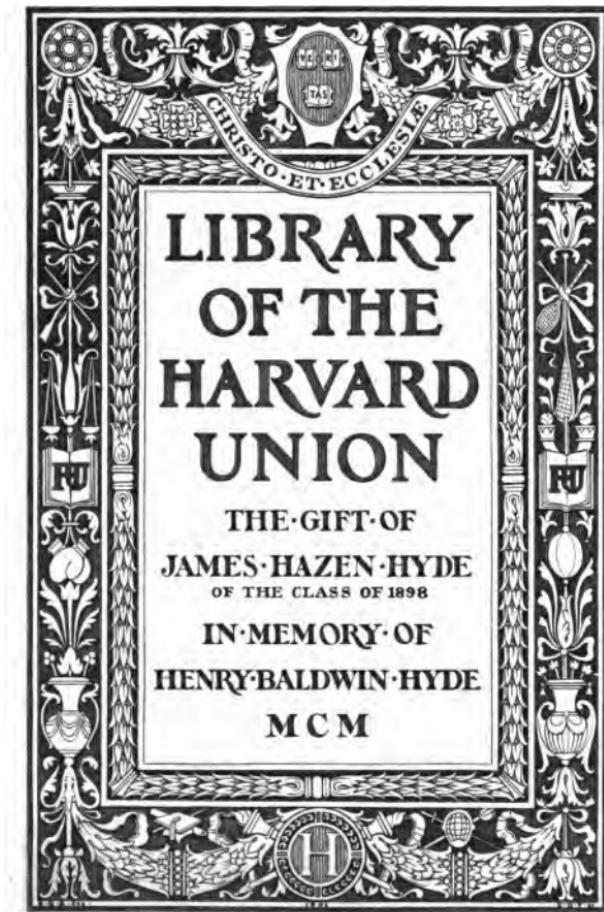


By the  
Author of



“The Habitant”

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By WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

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**The Habitant, and Other French-Canadian  
Poems.**

**The Voyageur, and Other Poems.**

**Johnnie Courteau, and Other Poems.**

**The Great Fight.**

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**G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS**

**NEW YORK AND LONDON**

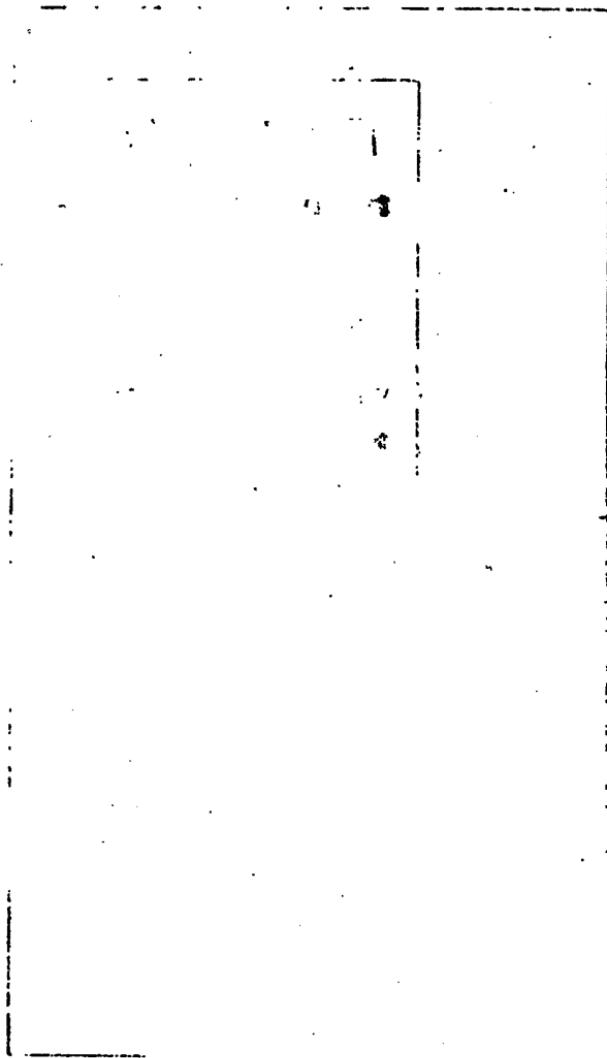




“ De house is shake lak' beeg eart'quake.”

*The Great Fight.*

(Page 59)



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# THE GREAT FIGHT

POEMS : : : : :  
: : AND SKETCHES

By William Henry  
Drummond, M.D.

EDITED, WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, BY  
May Harvey Drummond

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
Frederick Simpson Coburn



9480.

New York and London  
G. P. Putnam's Sons  
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**MAY HARVEY DRUMMOND**

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By G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

**The Knickerbocker Press, New York**

**LOVINGLY DEDICATED  
TO THOSE THREE BROTHERS  
WHO WERE HIS PRIDE AND JOY WHILE HE LIVED, AND  
NOW THAT HE HAS GONE REMAIN A STRONG  
TOWER OF DEFENCE TO HIS FAMILY**



## IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

By S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D., LL.D.

PEACE to his poet soul. Full well he knew  
To sing for those who know not how to praise  
The woodsman's life, the farmer's patient toil,  
The peaceful drama of laborious days.

He made his own the thoughts of simple men,  
And with the touch that makes the world akin  
A welcome guest of lonely cabin homes,  
Found, too, no heart he could not enter in.

The toilworn doctor, women, children, men,  
The humble heroes of the lumber drives,  
Love, laugh, or weep along his peopled verse,  
Blithe 'mid the pathos of their meagre lives.

While thus the poet-love interpreted,  
He left us pictures no one may forget—  
Courteau, Batiste, Camille mon frère and best,  
The good brave curé, he of Calumette.

With nature as with man at home, he loved  
The silent forest and the birches' flight  
Down the white peril of the rapids' rush,  
And the cold glamour of your Northern night.

Some mystery of genius haunts his page.  
Some wonder secret of the poet's spell  
Died with this master of the peasant thought.  
Peace to your Northland singer, and farewell!





IN offering to the public this short biographical sketch of William Henry Drummond, I do so with the utmost diffidence. The task of portraying a many-sided character such as his could only be successfully accomplished by one more gifted with the pen than I, and therefore for a novice like myself it remains but to be faithful to facts without any attempt at literary effect. This has been my endeavour, and Dr. Drummond's friends must judge if the picture bears any resemblance to the original.

When a merry mood was upon him, William would keep us all in roars of laughter with his witty nonsense. At these times he would turn to me with mock severity, saying: "If you were the right kind of wife, you would run for your note-book and take down

these ‘words of wisdom’ as they flow from my lips. But a man is never a hero to his valet or his wife.” And I would answer back that in my mind there was a store of notes which would some day be published under the title of “Side-Lights on the Author of *The Habitant*”—a book which would astonish the public and out-sell any of his. Little did we dream that his merry jesting would so soon be hushed, and that I should indeed be left to keep the promise so lightly made.

To those who knew William Henry Drummond and his life-work at all intimately, the title of this book, *The Great Fight*, will appeal not only in its relation to the poem bearing the title, but infinitely more to his own whole-hearted “fight” for national unity. The poems written by him, and published in previous volumes, viz: *The Habitant*, *Johnnie Courteau*, and *The Voyageur*, did perhaps more than anything else to bring into sympathetic touch the French and English races in Canada. Of

his purpose he wrote in the preface to his first volume, *The Habitant*:

“Having lived, practically, all my life, side by side with the French-Canadian people, I have grown to admire and love them, and I have felt that while many of the English-speaking public know, perhaps as well as myself, the French-Canadian of the cities, yet they have had little opportunity of becoming acquainted with the habitant, therefore I have endeavoured to paint a few types, and, in doing this, it has seemed to me that I could best attain the object in view by having my friends tell their own tales in their own way, as they would relate them to English-speaking auditors not conversant with the French tongue.”

The poems and prose sketches contained in this volume were written at various times, but mainly since the publication of his last book, *The Voyageur*. Some are connected with his life at Kerr Lake, in the now famous Cobalt District, where he died; some are in dialect, and deal with French-Canadian

life; and others relate to his own people, the Irish.

It has seemed to me advisable to write a few words of explanation and comment concerning some of the poems and prose pieces contained in this volume, which may be of interest to the reader. First, then, a word as to "The Great Fight." This poem will be better understood, if the reader is in possession of the following information. Every good "Canayen" has his own particular patron saint, but one and all unite in allegiance to the patron saint of Quebec, Saint John the Baptist, or St. Jean Baptiste, or again as he is familiarly known "The Leetle Jean Bateese." On the Saint's Feast Day, throughout the Province, processions take place, and he is represented by a small boy clad in sheep-skins, bearing a cross in his hand, who is driven throughout the city. It is a proud day for the chosen boy, but the pleasure he may get out of it depends very largely upon the weather.

You will find in the home of almost every

habitant a print of the saint, and sometimes the more fortunate one is the possessor of a plaster cast, and he has a natural and personal pride in his own particular statuette. So in "The Great Fight," the fact that the giddy young Joe Beliveau kisses Camille's pretty wife is passed over, but on the first word of disparagement of his "Leetle Jean Bateeese" the battle begins.

In "The First Robin" is brought out the old superstition that the first robin of spring brings good crops and good luck to the farmer with whom he makes his first home. The Doctor, in his practical humorous way, makes the old belief come out true, just as "good luck" is generally attained, by the hard daily work of the farmer with whom the robin makes his first home.

Among the Doctor's dearest friends was the Honorable Peter White, of Marquette, Michigan, a pioneer of the northern peninsula. Hence "Pierre LeBlanc," which will be appreciated by the many by whom Mr. White was known and loved, not only

in Michigan, but throughout the United States and Canada.

As for "Boule"—well, what "hunter man" has not had or known a dog like "Boule"?

In "Chibougamou" we hear of the habitant class when afflicted with the northern gold and silver fever. Some few have been successful, but "Chibougamou" tells the tale of one of the many who failed. But mark the happy touch in the home-coming, and the contented feeling that after all he has in Louise "the bes' of all."

The subtle sarcasm of "Deer Hunting" will appeal to healthy-minded lovers of the sport, and pray Heaven it may appeal to others too. I am reminded that the poem tells the general experiences and feelings of the "deer slaughterer" so truly that men of that class may not realize the sarcasm, or understand, but I think they will. If the shaft shot in this poem alone finds its mark, this book will have justified itself.

The short head-note that accompanies "The Tale of a Cocktail" makes further

explanation unnecessary, at least to male readers. We have all suffered.

“The Spanish Bird” was written in the Laurentian Club House at Lac la Pêche. The Doctor found the chief of the chicken clan one morning in a seemingly discontented mood. Hence the lay.

“The Godbout” is also connected with the Laurentian Club and should appeal to members of that organisation. The “Commodore” all members know and love. They know, too, his love of the Laurentides, and the leaping trout of its myriad lakes. But once the Commodore lapsed, or seemed to lapse, from grace, and sought a salmon stream, the Godbout. His closest friends were heartbroken at his fall, but one short season sufficed the errant sportsman, and he returned to his old love, if possible, more ardent than ever.

Most cities have within their limits a square or park, especially attractive to the “bummer” population. In Montreal it is Victoria Square, and while the verses bearing

that title have special interest to Montrealers, they will still be appreciated by citizens of other towns where similar resting-places exist.

William Drummond was perhaps above all an Irishman, warm-hearted and whole-souled, with an impulsive love for all things Irish. Hence his "He Only Wore a Shamrock." The motive of the poem is tersely explained in a head-note. The Doctor, it may be here remarked, was very much pleased, a few years later, when, after a visit to Ireland by Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, a special order was issued allowing the men in the Irish regiments to wear their native emblem under certain conditions.

"We're Irish Yet" speaks for itself. It was written specially for, and was read by the author himself at, the Annual Dinner of the St. Patrick's Society, in Montreal, on St. Patrick's Day, 1907, a few days before the author's death. It rings simple and true and will touch the hearts not only of Irishmen, but of men of other lands.

“Silver Lake Camp” will bring back memories to those who love the life in the open. No need of further words.

Of the poems connected with the Doctor’s life in the Cobalt District of Ontario, “Marriage” is, I think, as perfect in quiet humour as one could wish. If you read it once, you read it again and again, and always with the quiet pleasure that true humour brings, and you grow to sympathize with the rogue, who has, as the Irish put it, “a rag on every bush.”

In “Bloom,” the soft flower-like pink of a Cobalt vein, known as Cobalt Bloom, gives promises of riches to the prospector, and in that District is certainly the only bloom for him.

Mining men will naturally appreciate “The Calcite Vein” more than others, but those—and they are many—who have only dabbled in mines will understand, too, that if the vein does not “go ‘way down” things generally will “go ‘way up.”

The “stranger man wit’ hees hair all

w'ite," referred to, is a well-known mining engineer, one of the best authorities on things Cobaltish, whose white hair, however, denotes experience, not age.

In a mining camp like Cobalt, typhoid fever is apt at times to rage, especially in the early days of the settlement, and the simple tale of "The Boy from Calabogie" was, alas! applicable to many a bright young life that ended there. But, most of all, now, it seems to tell the tale of the passing of the poet himself. He went to Cobalt in seeming health and strength, when duty called, and only a few days later, came back, and like Dannie, at the train, "we lifted up the long box, without a word to say."

"Philorum Abroad" was the beginning of a series of letters which the author, after his return from the "Old Country," had in mind to write, but he hated to express himself in prose, and these two letters are all that he accomplished.

The poems now offered in this volume are

the last from the author of the *Habitant*. Some of them have not received his finishing touches, and he perhaps, always modest, always underrating his own work, might have held some back, but they all ring true and clean and healthy, and in them, whether humorous or sad, there are simplicity and a direct appeal to the heart. And so we let them all go, just as we have found them, that the people, who have loved their author's work, may have all, even to little scraps like "The Doon," with its gentle touch, revealing the reverence and love for things our forefathers knew and loved, just as his French-Canadian verses revealed the love and esteem he bore towards the people and land he knew so well himself.

In conclusion I offer my heartfelt thanks to those friends who have so kindly contributed material for this sketch, and copies of poems which had long since passed from my possession. And I would here make a special acknowledgment of my indebted-

ness to one friend, Mr. E. W. Thomson, for his kind encouragement and advice, without which the work might never have been accomplished.

MAY HARVEY DRUMMOND.

MONTRÉAL, 1908



The Drummond Plot in Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal.

The Doctor is buried under the square stone at the right of this Celtic Cross.



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# WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND



## WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

AT sunrise on Holy Thursday, 13th April, 1854, in Currawn House, near the village of Mohill, County Leitrim, Ireland, where his father, George Drummond, was then stationed, William Henry Drummond, "Poet of the Habitant," was born. That same evening the baby's grandmother, going into the garden, found there his father, studying intently the bright scroll of heaven. Turning to greet her he said: "I have been reading the boy's destiny in the stars; he is born to great things"—a prediction which caused the grandmother to smile indulgently, but the young mother treasured the saying in her heart, and lived to see its fulfilment.

Mr. Drummond was at this time an officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and two years later, with his family, was removed to Tawley, a little village which nestles on the

#### 4 William Henry Drummond

side of one of that triumvirate of mountains known as the "Three Sisters," which stand sentinel over the beautiful Bay of Donegal. Here in Tawley Manor House, the birthplace of his three brothers, William Henry passed the impressionable days of early boyhood, absorbing the poetry and romance of surroundings redolent of both. Tawley was a spot not famed for beauty alone, but steeped in the glamour of heroic days and the struggle of men for their birthright. In the poem "Child Thoughts," written in October, 1900, to commemorate the birthday of his youngest brother Tom, he has himself given us a perfect picture of this place and a clear record of its effect upon his boyish mind, an effect which endured to the end, and to which his last completed poem is a touching tribute. It may have been this earliest association with Nature, in all her most appealing aspects, among a clean, wholesome-minded peasantry, that fostered the boy's inherent love of honest, upright simplicity, and gave to his mind that perfect balance and sanity of



"The white-walled huts that strew the shore from Castleglass to old Belleek."



outlook for which, as a man, he was ever conspicuous.

At the head of the village school, of this date, at Tawley, was one of the old-time "hereditary scholars" of Ireland, a man poor and obscure it may be like most of his class, but with intellectual and moral attainments so rare in quality as to indelibly impress all who came in contact with him. To learn of this man, William Drummond went at the age of five, and proving an apt scholar from the first, was not infrequently left in charge of the class-room during any unavoidable absence of the master. On one of these occasions when Mr. and Mrs. Drummond happened to pay an unexpected visit to the school, they found their son the centre of an eager group of scholars, all clamouring for help from the lad, in many cases years their junior. "My faith," remarked the proud father, "the boy is more like master than pupil here!" It is no wonder, then, that between this learned old man and his bright pupil there grew up a friendship

## 6 William Henry Drummond

which was to outlast not only years, but separation also, a fact amply proven by the poet's wish, expressed so often in later years, that he might find the grave of Paddy McNulty—such was the master's name—and acknowledge his gratitude by erecting thereon a suitable monument.

It was at Tawley, too, that the boy first became a disciple of the immortal Isaak, and his first fly was cast upon the waters of the River Duff, which flowed by the very doors of the old Manor House. Here one day came Lord Palmerston to fish, and, finding the son of his friend, Mr. Drummond, sitting patiently with worm-baited hook waiting for a bite, the great statesman, who was also a keen fisherman, with a hatred of anything but what he considered clean sport, undertook to initiate the lad into the gentle art of fly-fishing, and at the same time to imbue the youthful mind with his own lofty ideals. So well did he succeed that this highest branch of the piscatorial art was ever after William Drummond's favourite

## William Henry Drummond 7

recreation, and his scorn of the baited hook a byword among fishermen.

After about seven years spent in this romantic spot, Mr Drummond, senior, with his wife and family, returned to Mohill for a while, before removing to Canada, where they had been only a few short months, when he passed away, leaving the brave little mother to face the New World with her four boys, the eldest barely eleven, and the youngest only five. With the slenderest of means at her command, the struggle was one that might well have crushed the bravest spirit. Mrs. Drummond's first consideration was the education of her boys, and she was firm in the determination that they should always be united and self-reliant, and that whatever the future might bring forth, they should be able at least to say that the little family owed everything, under God, to their own efforts. Her motto, like David Livingstone's, was ever, "Fear God, and work hard." Her simple faith carried her through difficulties again and again, and she lived to

## 8 William Henry Drummond

see the fruition of her hopes for her boys, passing away in her eighty-third year, happy in the admiring, love and devotion of her sons and their respective families.

Reverting for a moment to those early days of struggle, William Drummond went for a few short terms to a private school, and then, realizing at an earlier age than would most boys that his devoted mother sorely needed his help, he insisted upon shouldering his share of the burden. Taking up the study of telegraphy, he soon obtained an appointment, and became one of the most expert telegraphers of the time. In the initial days of his work he was located at Bord-à-Plouffe, a little village lying on the banks of the beautiful Rivière des Prairies, at the back of Mount Royal, and at that time a great centre of the lumber trade. Here it was that he first came in contact with the *habitant* and *voyageur*, and listened to their quaint tales of backwoods life; here that he heard from the lips of old Gédéon Plouffe the tragedy retold as "The Wreck



Belleek Castle, Ireland



of the Julie Plante," a poem of which he himself thought little, and never cared to recite, but which had made its way through the length and breadth of the American continent before ever his first book of poems was published. It was the old lumberman's reiteration of the words, "An' de win' she blow, blow, blow!" which rang so persistently in his ears that, at the dead of night, unable to stand any longer the haunting refrain, he sprang from his bed and penned the poem, which was to be the herald of his future fame.

In a letter dated May 12, 1903, and written to a dear friend of these times, he says:

I often think of the B. P. days of 1869, the first time I saw the old place, and even yet memory can summon up the wild gladiators of the "saw log" and "square lumber" raft, and I can hear them sing: "Trois beaux canards" and "Par derrière chez ma tante."

I did love those days, and I do so yet, intensely. One of these days I will write a story of the Rivière des Prairies, and dedicate to you.

There was a little wild strawberry plant

## 10 William Henry Drummond

that grew in July, 1869, on the right-hand side of the road leading to the river, and whenever I had a message to deliver to a raft-foreman I usually found a fresh young berry waiting for me. This happened on several occasions during the month I speak of, and is n't it strange that I never forgot the incident? But it is just such sweet little memories as this that fasten Bord-à-Plouffe deep down in my heart.

“Bord-à-Plouffe is on de reever,  
Bord-à-Plouffe is on de shore,  
An’ de family of Plouffe dere all aroun’,  
On some house dey got twenty,  
On some house only ten,  
But w’ere you get such girl  
And such fine young men?”

A few years of productive work, and then, in brighter days, William Drummond turned again to his interrupted studies, and we find him a pupil at the High School, passing thence to McGill College, and on to Bishop’s Medical College, from which he graduated in 1884. His first medical appointment was that of House Surgeon of the Western Hospital, a position which he filled to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Of the boy's school days there is little record left us, save the impression made by his personality on his fellows, an impression of strength and integrity, which deepened with age and further acquaintance, but never changed, and to-day we find one of these school friends writing thus of him:

At the High School, I remember the Doctor as being much bigger and stronger than any other pupil. There was a certain reserve about him at first acquaintance which gradually melted and enhanced the friendship which followed later. One felt that his confidence was not to be lightly gained, and it was valued accordingly. He was slow to anger and magnanimous as beffitted his strength. Even as a youth he had a remarkable sense of justice, and would not permit any bullying when he was present.

Throughout his college career, "Bill Drummond" was better known as an athlete than as a student. The exact sciences never appealed to him, the labour involved in working out a mathematical problem being all too slow for a mentality as swift as his. Conclusions were more often reached by the

## 12 William Henry Drummond

rapid bounds of intuition than by any analytical method, and, while to this very rapidity of intellect he owed much of his success in after life, both as physician and poet, yet in college examinations they were of less account than the more homely gifts of the steady plodder. He has therefore left us no record of scholarships taken nor gold medals won, save on the University campus, where his splendid physique and immense strength gained for him many honours. In snow-shoeing, hammer-throwing, putting the shot, and fast walking, he had few equals, and was for a time Canadian amateur champion of the last-named exercise.

In August, 1883, in company with another medical student, William went to visit Dr. George Nelson, grandson of Wolfred, of Rebellion fame, who was then medical practitioner at Marbleton, in the township of Dudswell. The party took a tent with them, camping out on an island in Silver Lake, a picturesque sheet of water situated about two miles from the village. Here also

were camped many other residents of Marbleton, among them being the Rector and his family, who took a kindly interest in the young strangers and made them welcome to their hospitable circle. The Rev. Thos. Shaw Chapman, who is still living, is one of that old-time band of pioneers who did not go forth into the wilderness only to get from it all they could of material benefit, but also to give unsparingly of their time and strength to the betterment of things material as well as spiritual. This grand old man, on his first coming to Marbleton, built, literally with his own hands, churches and houses, surveyed railroads, and there being at this time no doctor in the vicinity, even cared for the sick among his parishioners. "From early morn till dewy eve," his spare form might be seen toiling up the steep hillside on which the village stands. It might be to the bed of death, or to a social at the home of a friend. In both cases his welcome was sure, for his sympathy was unlimited and his counsel wise. Between men with so much in common

## 14 William Henry Drummond

a friendship was soon established, which the Doctor carried to his grave, and the "Pastor of the Uplands" still holds as a sacred treasure in the hidden recesses of his heart. These were happy days for William, and in March, 1900, we find him writing thus to Mr. Chapman:

God bless you for a man who is always thinking of his friends! Time goes on, and naturally many things and incidents slip from our memory, but never shall I forget the few days we spent together in camp at Silver Lake. I feel now that your quiet, calm, philosophical nature and loving temperament influenced me more than I was conscious of at the time. If we can ever manage to come together again, I trust it will be under the same conditions and circumstances.

Here is another letter bearing date of February 3, 1896, which is too full of interesting details and too typical of the writer to be omitted:

**MY DEAR MR. CHAPMAN:**

It gives me great pleasure to know that you and yours are well, and the knowledge, too, that camping and various other schemes



William Henry Drummond  
*From a photograph by Hayes*



are still engaging your active attention affords me delight. Dear me, how Father Time will persist in running along at the same old gait! It has often been a matter of surprise to me that the "Pastor of the Uplands" has not written something of his life among the township's hills; you who have seen so much of Nature ought to give us a volume equal to anything John Burroughs ever wrote. I am engaged in collecting together the verse that I have from time to time been guilty of penning, dialect and otherwise, and the book ought to be published for Christmas of this year.

By-the-by, do you remember a little piece on "Silver Lake Camp"? I don't think there was much in it, but if you have a copy I wish you would send it to me. I enclose a ballad of "Ye Ancient Régime," a tale told by an Old-Country Frenchwoman to her Canadian-born granddaughter. In the early days of our country, as you know, the Seigneurs were, as a rule, men who had earned their possessions by the sword on Continental battle-fields, and these were the days when a gentleman was a gentleman in something more than name. The ballad has been set to music, and Madame Albani will include it in her repertoire.

When the weather became too cold for camping under canvas, the two students

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moved on to Clear Lake, a spot situated high up among the hills, about five miles from Marbleton. Here by the shores of the lake dwelt Major John Weyland, with his brother Charles, and a sister. The two young men established themselves in a little shanty owned by the Major, which stood in the midst of a group of dark fir-trees, not many yards distant from the home of the brothers. In this lonely and romantic spot they spent many pleasant days, fishing and strolling about the country, and when twilight fell, sitting with the soldier brothers on a fallen fir-tree discoursing on many things. Major Weyland was a brilliant conversationalist, and it is said that the sallies of wit between the middle-aged soldier and the young medical student were sparkling and memorable.

With William Drummond a friend once was always a friend, and Charles, the only surviving one of the trio, received the following letter from the poet on his last Christmas on earth.